

SPEECH

OF

HON. JAMES T. BRADY,

AT THE

UNION MASS MEETING

HELD IN

NEW YORK, MARCH 6, 1863.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND FELLOW CITIZENS OF NEW YORK:

You have heard the reference to silver tones, as if indeed a trumpet festival were to be heard when I had the honor and pleasure of addressing you. During the last few minutes I have had serious doubts where I was, in truth, born. My earliest recollection is that I derived my nativity in the city of New York, of which your worthy Chairman [Mayor Opdyke] is the chief executive officer; but with the accustomed self-appreciation of the race from which I sprung, I think I may become the competitor of Homer, and have the world divided in opinion as to where I was born.

A VOICE—Louder! We can't hear what you say, and we came here to hear you.

MR. BRADY—Which to me is a great gratification; for it is so long since I discovered that anybody wanted to hear what I said on any subject that my vanity is gratified to the extreme. I recognize in the voice that first broke silence at this magnificent meeting those rich tones which he who was to have presided here, once declared gave pleasure to his heart, and it does not become me a descendant of the Green Isle, to admit that there is anything less than music in anything that comes from that source. I am a little disappointed, however, because I expected to have the pleasure and instruction which every man, however great he may be in intellect, or merit, will undoubtedly receive, if he be American born or American in heart, as a privilege of looking upon the form that I expected to see here to night.

[Applause.] All of you remember that Washington Irving, in his beautiful essay upon Stratford-on-Avon, said it was something to have seen the dust of Shakespeare. We find the genius of the American people at this hour expressed in the two words that form the name of Winfield Scott. [Applause.] He is absent from this procession to-night. I call it a procession, although you sit here stationary, because it is a movement to a result which no physical power can thwart. [Loud applause.] Cato's statue is indeed absent, but Cato lives, thank God, and will live for years. I am also disappointed in not hearing the clarion tones of that great son of Kentucky, whose loyalty is equal to his eloquence, and that is the highest compliment I can pay him—Joseph Holt. [Loud applause.] And yet I shall be gratified with this circumstance, because those who hear him, unless he has failed since I last enjoyed that pleasure, wish for no other gratification when he has spoken. But here I am, with all these deficiencies charged upon myself—a mortal man of the nineteenth century, with no greater hope than that I may be honored with the position described by your great poet in that beautiful poem denominated 'June,' which gladdened the inmost recesses of my heart when I first began to love poetry as the synonym of freedom and truth—

"Whose heart in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is that his grave is green."

But that grave of mine, however unnamed or unnoticed, I want to be distinguished by some

lingering of affection in some heart that cleaves to the recollection of him who once was, as the grave of one whose country was the United States of America. [Loud cheers.] That is my country. I can admit of no other. There is no name to be substituted for that. There is no flag except ours that I can ever accept, no star to be taken out of it, no stripe to be stolen from it [cheers]; stars to be added to it without number [cheers]; stripes to be accumulated till the eye tires of looking at them; so that, with all the gallant history of its past and glorious associations of its present, however gloomy the prospect may appear to many, there shall be for us now and hereafter, one country, one constitution, one destiny. [Loud cheers.] I was dining with a friend to-day, who read to me an extract from a newspaper—the *Express*—[Laughter and expression of disfavor.] saying that this was a meeting of Abolitionists, and that Brady would not be present. I am not certain that I am; for there is so much of individuality and spiritual power and tendency to great results in this chamber, charged with patriotism, that I am nothing in this majestic presence. [Applause.] But so far as I am capable of knowing myself, I am here—here with delight—here with pride. Although from the first time that I ever made a speech in public till now most of you have been opposed to me, as I well understand, in political sentiment, I thank God that it has been permitted me to be present on an occasion when any one human being would attach importance to my voice in saying that I stand up now, as I always have done, for the preservation of the Union and the Constitution of the country. [Loud cheers.] When I began life I heard, as I afterwards heard, a word called Yankee. It certainly does not apply to me. But the South has applied that word to all of us at the North. Now, I am free to say that I discover in the Yankee character some particular features that I no more admire than I do some of the prominent traits in the inhabitants of the land from which I sprang. But I, nevertheless, accept the name of Yankee as applied to me in the spirit of our forefathers in the revolutionary period; and if the South can find no more of disgrace to be attached to it than its undying struggle for the preservation of this Government, whether slavery exists or falls, I thank God for it. [Loud applause.]

You will pardon me, my fellow-citizens, if I offend the prejudices of some of you in speaking my mind. The first speech I ever made for a Presidential candidate was in behalf of a Southern man. From that time to this, my sympathies have been strongly with that portion of the Union. But, gentlemen, to make the matter pointed, if I lived in the house with a friend, and he announced to me some day that under no circumstances would he associate with me any longer, I would propose to vindicate what is manly in my nature by telling him that I would go somewhere where I could find suitable company. [Great merriment and applause.] And when I came here to-night, and as I passed through the streets to-day, I was beset by gentlemen for whom I have greatest re-

spect, who wondered whether I would speak at a meeting where gentlemen always opposed to us in politics would be present, and where perhaps a spirit of freedom stronger than any that had entered into their natures might be exhibited. Gentlemen, I differ with many of you in regard to the causes, the conduct, the prosecution and the probable results of the war in which we are engaged.

But, with the blessing of Heaven, whoever may applaud and whoever may censure, I should be false to the Irish race, from which I sprung, to find here a home and a refuge from the persecution and oppression of that detested land, to which the first speaker too politely referred, [applause and a hiss,] if I did not use my last breath, and employ the last quiver of my lips, in the utterance of a prayer to Heaven against all assailants, internal and external, for the preservation of the American Government. [Loud applause.] When this war broke out, I knew that it was urged on by the South. I hoped that it might terminate early; I hoped that my Southern countrymen—for such they are—would develop among them some desire to remain with us. I detected, with regret, that they had prepared to make an assault upon a Union that they ought to love. I maintained silence in regard to it. You will excuse my egotism, but I now justify myself in my own presence. I found that they proposed to take to themselves Fort Sumter, the forts at Key West and Pensacola, Tortugas and Fortress Monroe. I thought it was quite essential to the dignity and prosperity of the country that we should retain these fortresses. I think so now. I did hope, however, that the Southern people would put their feet upon the necks of their leaders, and insist upon the maintenance of the Union. But they have informed us that they would consent to no such condition. They have told us that if we gave them a blank paper and pencil to write the terms of a new compact, they would not agree to it. Therefore it is a war declared for all ultimate results that can come, and I spit upon the Northern man who takes any position except for the maintenance of the Government. [Here almost the entire audience rose to their feet, waived their hats, and cheered vociferously for some moments.] I surrender here all opinions that may sway a Presidential contest. I surrender all inquiry as to who shall be Governor of any State. I give up all inquiry as to who shall be Mayor of the city of New York—although I have no great objection to my friend, the President of this meeting, for whom I did not vote. [Laughter.] I stand here in the presence of the assembled multitudes of the past. I feel glowing within me what may have animated the heart of the Egyptian, when, chained to one of the great stones that was to form part of the magnificent pyramid to illustrate the majestic powers of the crumbling mortal who was to perish within them, he felt that the time would come when there would be a government of freedom in the world. I have within me the hope of the poor serf in Russia, the enthusiasm of the young Hungarian, who, by the little flickering flame of freedom, even though it be in a dungeon,

finds himself stimulated with the hope that he may once see a land beyond the deep, not revealed, perhaps, even to a Moses from Mount Pisgah, where a free people have established a free Government. And in the name of Almighty God, I invoke such curses as he may permit, innocuous as mine may be, to put an end to any man who would destroy a structure like that. [Loud applause.] Are there such men? There are. Let me allude to them in classes. [A voice—"Brooks."]

"Books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, And good in everything." [Laughter.]

I propose to deal in general principles. Now, if my Irish friend be anywhere within the sound of my voice, he knows what is moving in this frame of mine, the son of an Irish father, who migrated in hot haste, and was chased into the port of New York, his highest ambition being that his son might be born in America. [Great merriment.] Some of my fellow-citizens of New York, and some of my friends with whom I quite agree about the absence of any necessity to violate the Constitution in the matter of arrests, or otherwise, undertake to talk to me about freedom of speech being suppressed. I would like to know when the time was in the history of this country, for the last twenty years, that I could have dared to say in the City of Charleston what a Southerner could say with impunity in this city? [Loud applause.] My friends from Massachusetts must pardon me when I say that for many years they have offended my Celtic prejudices by informing me that we are all of the Anglo-Saxon race. I wish to be understood in regard to that as the boys say about New York, that "I don't see it" [Laughter], for certainly none of those from whom I spring have any connection with that particular department of human distribution. [Laughter.] A distinguished representative of the United States at the Court of St. James told them that the people of this country felt more interest in the prosperity of London than of New York. I will not mention the name—but I will say that he did not belong to this state. What offends me most is the expression of those Englishmen on our Territory who dare, in their customary aping of the language and deportment of their superiors, to cavil about the arms and progress of the country in which they find a place so far superior to any they could be permitted to enjoy in their own land. [Applause.] They are invited to clubs by gentlemen, and they lie about them in saying they throw dice for drink, where dice never were known. They are spies and pimps and eavesdroppers who are admitted to circles of private society, and go out and write letters saying there was one thing wanting. And so there was—a sturdy servant to kick the inquisitive vagabond into the street. [Laughter and applause.] They hang around the purlieus of our town and drink their ale—which they very seldom pay for themselves—and then turn up their snub noses and open their ugly mouths to abuse a country in which they are entertained. [Applause.] We are a patient people; but I hope to God that the last illustration of that kind imported to this country will prove that the goods are not credited to this market, and we do not

mean to have English men insult us under any circumstances whatever. [Applause.] I will differ with the majority here, in reference to one thing. Great apprehensions are entertained lest England should interfere. I have prayed to God on my bended knees, that she would. [Loud applause.] Let her but exhibit one single manifestation in that direction, and there is not a man of my race that would talk about the exemption of 45 years of age. [Great laughter.] He would hobble up on his crutch, in the ardent expectation of splitting the head of any one who undertook to interfere in a matter that belongs to ourselves. Permit me, however, to do justice to those wise, excellent and patriotic gentlemen of England, who have been so just toward us throughout this controversy. I would disgrace myself, and insult you, if I did not admire the character of that great man, John Bright [Loud applause], whose last observation in regard to *The London Herald and Standard* is that he does not care much about their censure for neither of them in the markets of England could affect the price of a pinch of snuff. [Laughter and applause.]

The single reason, as you all know, why France and England desire to interfere in this fight is an acknowledgment, in the presence of the world that they are indebted to us for the means of employing and supporting their population. [Applause.] One hundred thousand men in Lancashire maintained by public charity when I last spoke to an audience assembled! One hundred thousand! Which led me to make the proposition, to which I challenge any contradiction, that wild and fierce and blind as the Rebels are, each division of the Union in its armed presentation, is greater than the power of England! [Applause.] I was happy to discover that what falls from lips so obscure as mine, provoked a whole editorial column from a Manchester paper. They said that no American could have uttered a sentiment of that kind, and they recognized in the name of Brady one of those Irish Anglo-Phobian Papists who have been controlling the doctrines of this country. [Laughter.] I think if that editor was here he would hardly suppose that I had religion enough to control anybody; or if I had that it would control such an assemblage as this. [Laughter.] Now, fellow-citizens, I am met everywhere, as you are, by the question, How is the thing to end? I am sorrow to say that the presupposed answer to that question is interfered with by two classes of men. First, by the women of this country. Bachelor as I am, no doubt this remark will subject me to censure. But I say if the women of the North had manifested that interest, which they should in the success of our cause, which the women of the South have done in theirs, thousands more of men would have been stimulated to take their position in the field. I can never find myself *en rapport* with that class of people who manifest something like pleasure at the success of our foe. What is this war about? It certainly has grown into a war; it certainly is a war of the North against the South. And when I talked

with Southerners, as I did with three in Philadelphia last Sunday, as ardent Secessionists, and as bitter opponents as I can find anywhere—Jefferson Davis himself—I said, “Gentlemen, you must admit that there is a moral superiority in the people with whom I am associated, when you can talk to me freely what I would not dare to say at the South, except at the peril of my existence.” [Applause.] And I said to them as I say to you: How is this thing to end? I say with your permission, gentlemen, to my friends of the Democratic party, whom I cannot meet one by one on the street, and who perhaps would not value my opinion if I did—Sir, how do you propose to end it? The South say to you, “You are all Yankees; we propose no association with you, and will consent to none.” Have you ever seen a man with a white face upon him or a black face upon him who would pursue for the sake of society the person who spurned him?” [Cheers.] You ask me how this is to end. With the feeble powers that I have possessed since I arrived at Man’s estate, I have struggled for that which I would contend for if the Constitution were restored or continued, that is every right which the South can justly claim under that sacred instrument. But they say we will make no peace. They propose that there shall be two governments on this soil, armed governments. Sir, I cannot consent to any such condition. [“No!”] Rome and Sparta, Carthage, and Athens were all republics; this was taught to you in your primer. Each of them was a military power. I refer you to *The Federalist* and the articles of Alexander Hamilton in regard to the possibility of maintaining separate organizations of government on this continent. When you can answer them, let me see your treaties or hear your discourse and I will be submissive, as I hope I have always been, to the voice of reason. But, Mr. Southerner, listen to me and the men who have stood by the South against the denunciations of the presses—and, gentlemen I see them represented on this platform—listen to me who, with the feeble capacity that I possess, have insisted always that you should have all the rights to which you are entitled. You say, no. Mr. Lincoln was elected President, but you went into the canvass. He was chosen President, and yet there was a majority in both branches of Congress against him, I defy you to point out a single act of the Government which should have provoked any hostility on your part. But as long as there is a breath in my body—if you make it a question between the South and the North—I should think I was unworthy of the mother who bore me if I did not go for any position sustained by the Constitution of the United States. [Applause.]

And now, gentlemen, in conclusion, I propose to answer that question to my Southern friends; What will come of this war? You say you will never consent to be united with us. We say that we will never agree to the existence of two military Governments arising out of the same people on the same territory. The issue is distinct. [Cheers.] How is this to be resolved? I will tell you, gentlemen, my opinion, and yet many here in accordance with that difference of opinion

to which I have referred, will differ with me. I have said in the earlier part of my remarks that there were some qualities of the New-England character which did not commend themselves closely to my special regard. At the same time you will permit me to say that the most disinterested acts of friendship which I have ever received have been from people opposed to me in political sentiment. [Uproar near the door. “Go on!” “Go on!”] Oh, I will go on. That is no more than one single raid of a small lot of Rebels. [Cheers and laughter.] My opinion is founded upon this. I remember on an occasion when we celebrated St. Patrick’s Day—a circumstance to which I never had any special objection, as when we made punch for others and Judys of ourselves, and still grew warm in the glow of social intercourse—Gen. Shields [cheers] made this remark, that wherever the Yankee located a blacksmith shop, a tavern, or a school house, he never was known to secede from it. [Cheers.] Can you remember any instance to the contrary? Why, half-way between Cairo and Suez, on the Grand Desert, a Yankee opened a house to introduce the travelers of that region to an institution called buckwheat flour slap jacks [laughter], and had them cooked to a nicety by a regular and momentous tick of a Yankee clock. [Laughter and cheers.] And if we have come to the position called the falling-off place, we shall find a Yankee there sitting on the brink, with his legs hanging over, and looking off and sighing, not like Alexander for new worlds to conquer, but that this world is so small. [Applause.] Now I tell my Southern brethren that their only chance is to let the Constitution be their guide, for if these Yankees once get down into that Southern territory, who have a theory about this war, and put arms into the hands of the negroes [loud cheering], and put up their long feet on the tables of the estates of which they take possession, I don’t want to be the lawyer in an action of ejectment. [Great laughter and applause.] I sincerely believe that unless the gentlemen of the South will manifest some lingering remnant of attachment to the Union, and agree that the Constitution of the United States shall preserve us as one people in the territory that we occupy, the end of this war will be occupation; and Mr. Eli Thayer, whom I have never had the pleasure of seeing, in advance of me has illustrated the fact that whenever you show any place to the Yankee to go to, he goes there, and when they propose to remove him they find it exceedingly difficult. [Cheers.] You will pardon me for relating an anecdote. A man in a hotel in New Orleans heard his friend in the next room, who was subject to nightmare, making a fearful noise. He went in and said, “Why, you are in a dreadful state!” “Why, I am frightened,” answered his friend, “I have had a dreadful dream!” “Did you dream of death?” “Worse than that.” “Did you dream of the devil?” “Worse than that.” “Well, then, what did you dream of?” “I thought I was back in the State of Maine!” [Great laughter.] That class of people can never be defeated. I am sorry to say it; I am an un-

willing witness ; and I hope my Teutonic friends, to whom the first speaker alluded, will excuse me when I say that neither whiskey, punch nor lager beer will ever overcome those iconoclasts. Before I saw the ruins of the Old World I thought I should shed a tear over them, but when I discovered that they were the stepping-stones by which the human race rose to its present height, they became a pleasant sight to me. Here civilization has found its last resting-place. There is no place to which to go back ; civilization knows no regurgitation, it has no reflux wave. The people of the South in the single State of Virginia would never employ the necessary physical

powers to redeem that exhausted soil. Nobody will say, after my discourse closes, that I have been very eulogistic to the speaker, but seriously, in the presence of my God, in the exercise of the best capacities that I know how to employ, I say to my friends of the South, however gallant and chivalric and persevering may be their struggle in the field, all history will be false, all analogies fallacious, every promise to the human race an absurdity, if this people who have conquered the ocean, and are willing to conquer all circumstances of privation, shall not own the whole of this continent before this century expires. [Loud continued applause.]

